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NEW REPAIR METHODS USED AT RIGA CAR DEPOT

Up to 1951, the cost of repairing freight cars at the Riga Car Depot exceeded plans and the depot operated unprofitably. In 1950, the cost of making capital repairs on a two-axle boxcar was 452 rubles higher than planned, and the cost of making annual repairs on a two-axle boxcar or gondola exceeded the plan by 20 and 131 rubles, respectively. Norms for both material and wages were exceeded.

The principal reasons for these excessive costs were deficiencies in repair methods and the unreliable system of paying wages according to a piecework system. This method of paying wages resulted in an overexpenditure of material and spare parts and made it possible for the workers to receive payment for incomplete operations.

At the beginning of 1951, the Ministry of Transportation authorized the depot to start paying wages on the basis of cars completed, rather than by the piecework system then in existence. The results of the past 6 months prove this method to be highly effective.

The entire plan for making capital repairs on freight cars for the system is being carried out by the Riga Car Depot. In addition, annual repairs are done at the depot. In making annual repairs, old parts and materials were removed from cars undergoing capital repairs, are used.

Previously, the workmen had to carry their tools and the equipment from car to car. Under the present system, the capital repair of cars is done in six different positions. Tools and necessary equipment are placed along the track near the position where they are to be used. The cars move over the track from position to position, until they are completely repaired.

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The first position is located outside the shop, near the inspector's platform. In this position, the cars are dismantled and the springs removed. The parts removed are delivered to the inspector's platform where they are inspected, while the usable parts are sent directly to the assembly shop. Parts requiring repair are sent to the proper shops, and parts which cannot be used are sent to the scrap heap. The planks and lining removed from the cars are sorted in the scrap heap.

The workmen employ the following equipment in this position: jacks to lift up the car so the springs can be removed, tools to remove coupling hooks and pins, and equipment to remove the automatic couplers and friction draft gears. There are also ladders, movable scaffolds, and equipment to remove the roof frame.

In the second position, the unremoved parts are straightened, new or reconditioned cross beams, gusset plates, and brackets, are installed, and parts of the frame and body are patched. In this position, the workmen employ equipment to straighten the cross and tie beams, burners to heat the parts to be straightened, pneumatic drills, hammers, and electric heaters. In addition, they have a gas generator for gas welding and burning, an electric welding machine, rivet bars, and equipment necessary to prevent the frame from buckling.

In the third position, wooden frame posts are installed, the body is braced, framework is erected, molding and cross ties are installed, the body is lined, carlines are erected, the roof is built on the car, and the buffer parts and spring are assembled. In this position are found movable scaffolds, drills, and equipment for installing the draw bars, draft gears, and automatic couplers.

In the fourth position, the car is raised again, this time to remove the wheels from under the body. The wheels and spring rigging are repaired and assembled, the journal boxes are serviced and, when the body is lowered on the wheels again, the car is sprayed and part of the floor is installed. The painted wheels and fitted bearings are attached to the body.

The laying of the floor is completed in the fifth position. There are scaffolds at this position for laying and painting the roof. The car is given a first painting and ready-made doors are installed in this position.

The sixth position is the finishing position. The roof, exterior, interior, and the underframe of the car are sprayed, and the roof and exterior are given a second coat of paint. The car is stenciled and turned over to the ministry's inspector.

Car brakes are made safe by two brake specialists who remove the brake in the first position, install the brake cylinders and tanks in the third, fit rods, levers, and air pipes in the fourth, adjust and test the air brakes, and have the car ready for inspection in the fifth position.

All gas welding is done at the first and second positions; all electric welding is done at the second and third positions. Special racks for storing parts and material are located near the second, third, fourth, and fifth positions.

Two cars are completely repaired during each 8-hour shift. A car stands in one position 4 hours, and is moved to successive positions before operations start in the morning and during the lunch period. A car undergoing capital repairs is held up for repairs 72 hours, or 3 full days. The cars are brought in according to a schedule under which there is at least one car ready for repairs a day in advance.

Annual car repair is done on two tracks which are divided into four positions each. During an 8-hour shift, eight cars leave these two tracks.

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Proper work organization on an assembly line basis helped to establish a new system of paying wages according to consolidated norms and valuations. Previously, 519 different valuations were used at the depot; at present, there are 16 consolidated norms and valuations which cover the cost of dismantling and assembling an entire car. The new valuations were established as a result of a 6-month survey of all repair operations.

An order is now given to groups of workers, and wages are apportioned according to hours worked and in accordance with skills. In the past, workmen, who dismantled the car removed parts from it unnecessarily. The more they removed, the more job orders they received, inasmuch as valuations were based on the number of parts removed rather than cars completed. According to the new method of paying wages, it is not advantageous now to remove any usable parts or any suitable lumber simply to boost production, because wages are based on completed cars. Dismantlers are now interested in reducing the volume of work and thus preserve the usable parts and lumber on the car.

With the second quarter 1951, the depot began to show a profit on every car undergoing capital repairs. For example, during this time, the depot has saved .18 cubic meter of lumber, 34 kilograms of sheet iron, and 8.9 kilograms of bolts and nuts above norm on each car. On cars undergoing annual repairs, there was a saving of .15 cubic meter of lumber and 2.4 kilograms of sheet iron.

The new method of paying wages according to cars completed not only increased production and effected a saving in materials and stock parts, but also reduced the number of working personnel. Before evaluations were consolidated, 11 men worked at the second position. They were interested primarily in individual quantity production and, as a result, the dented but repairable end sills were frequently removed from the underframe. At the new pay rates, the workers are able to repair these sills without removing them, and with a reduced force. Eight men now work in this position, instead of 11.

The cost of making capital repairs on a boxcar during 6 months in 1951 averaged 445 rubles a car less than estimated, while the cost of making annual repairs was 70 rubles per car less than estimated. Moreover, repair costs are being reduced month by month. The number of workmen in the assembly shop was reduced from 96 to 68 men, production was increased, and wages were increased 20-30 percent.

The Riga Car Repair Depot is meeting its assignment, has improved the quality of its repairs and, during 6 months of 1951, showed a profit of 460,000 rubles, 155,000 of which is realized from the repair of freight cars.

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